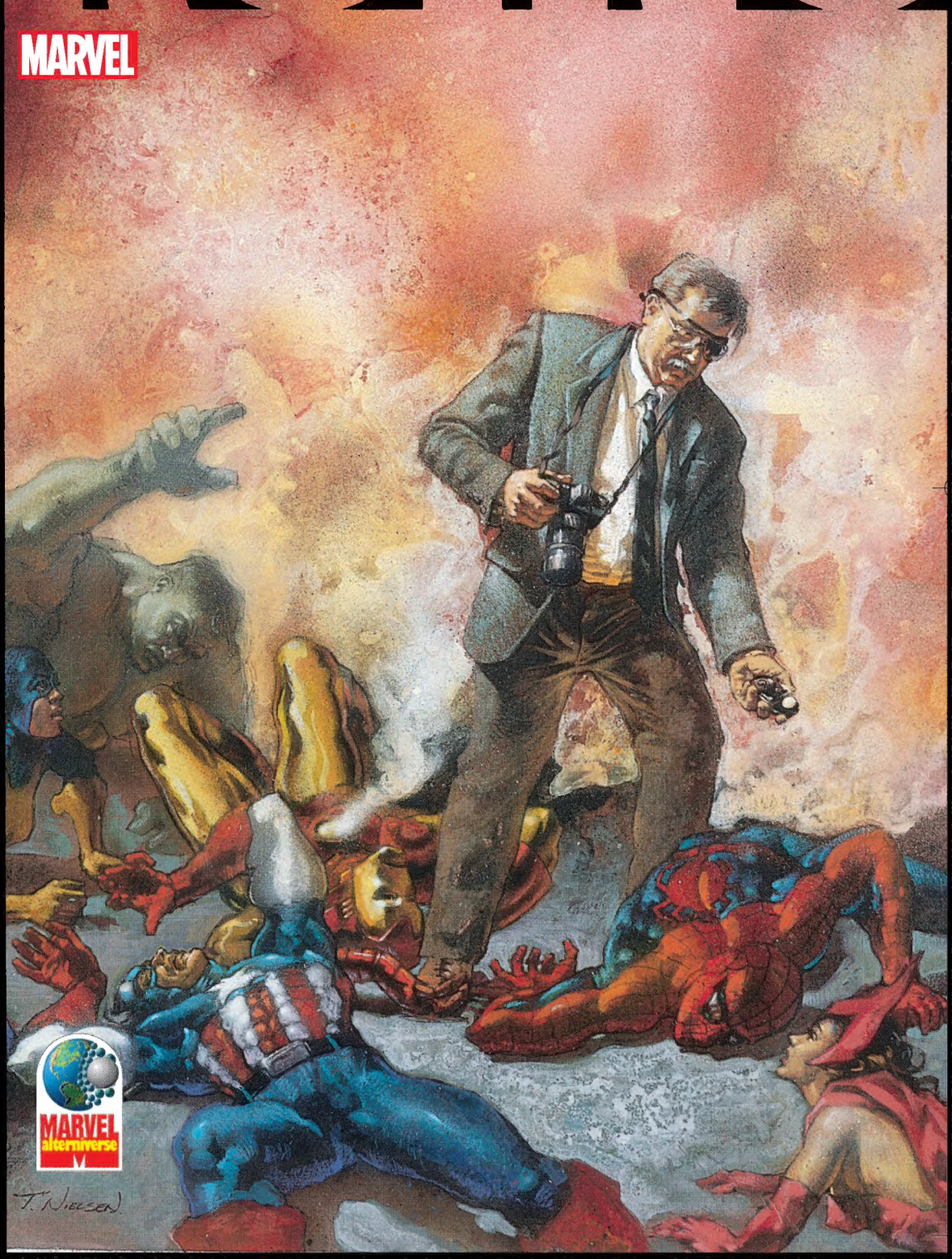
BOOK ONE OF TWO

RUINS™

MARVEL



MARVEL alterniverse

T. NIELSEN

RUINS

BOOK ONE: "MEN ON FIRE"

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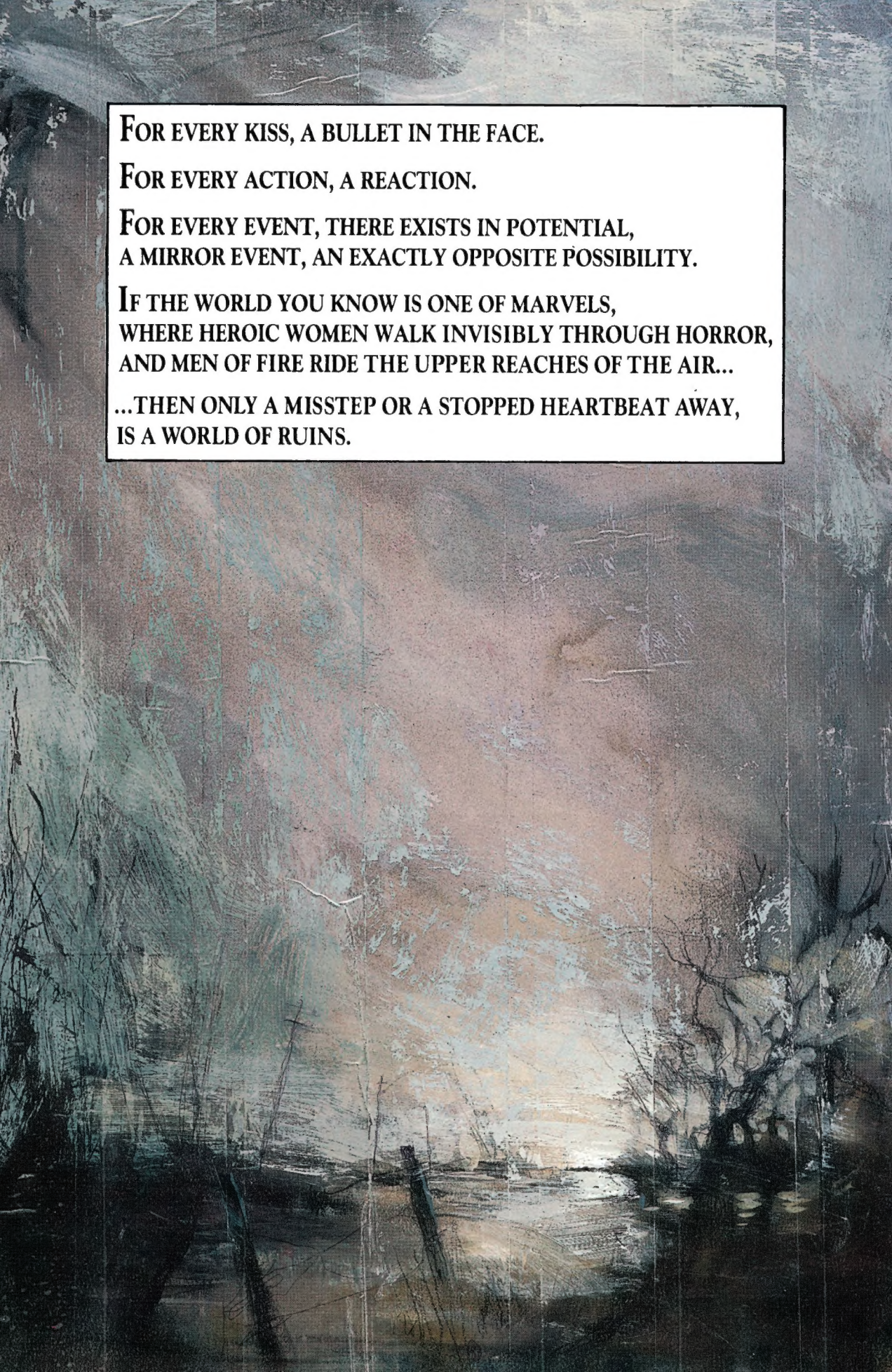

FOR EVERY KISS, A BULLET IN THE FACE.

FOR EVERY ACTION, A REACTION.

FOR EVERY EVENT, THERE EXISTS IN POTENTIAL,
A MIRROR EVENT, AN EXACTLY OPPOSITE POSSIBILITY.

IF THE WORLD YOU KNOW IS ONE OF MARVELS,
WHERE HEROIC WOMEN WALK INVISIBLY THROUGH HORROR,
AND MEN OF FIRE RIDE THE UPPER REACHES OF THE AIR...

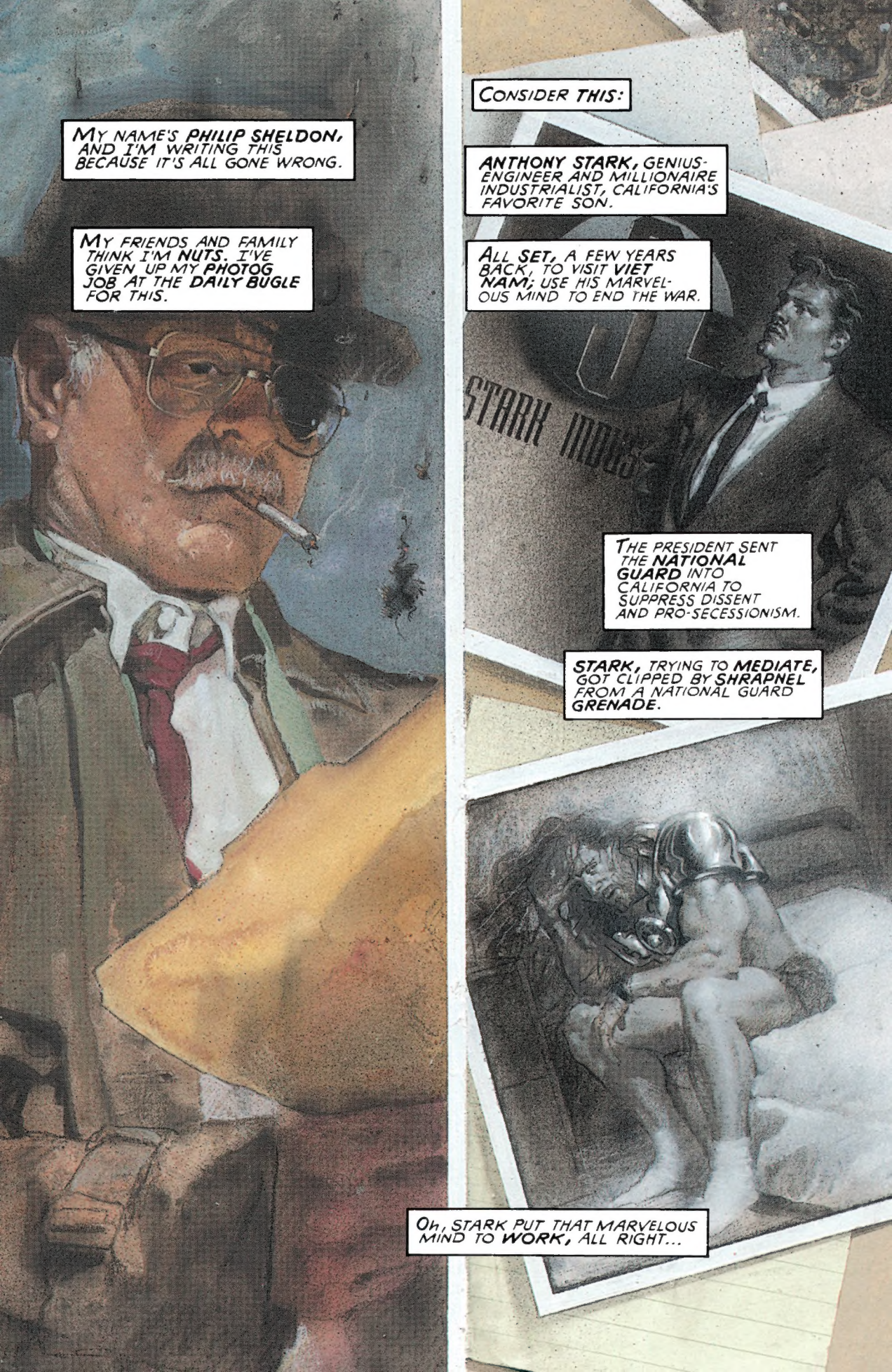
...THEN ONLY A MISSTEP OR A STOPPED HEARTBEAT AWAY,
IS A WORLD OF RUINS.

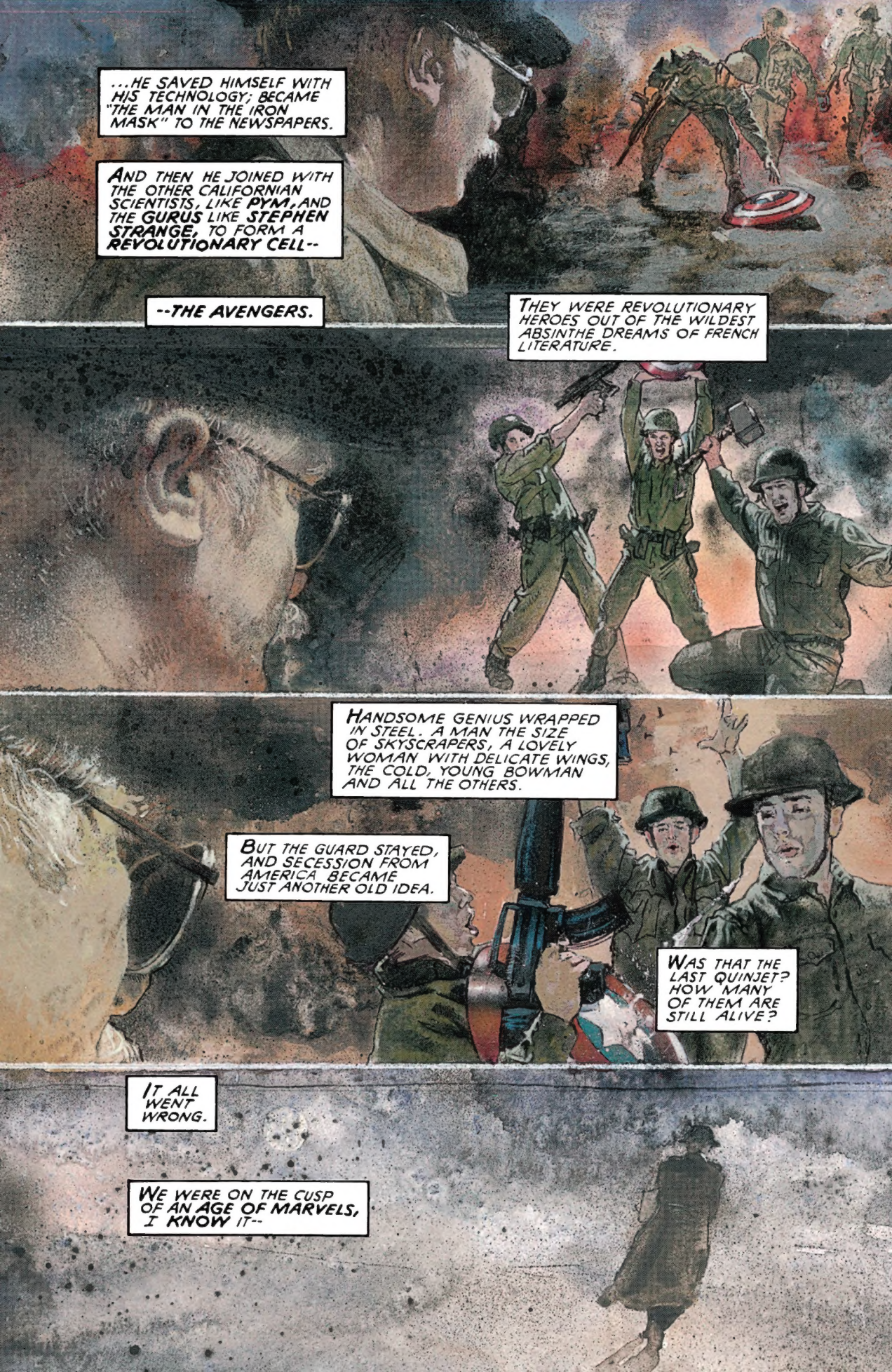
CALIFORNIA IN SUMMER.

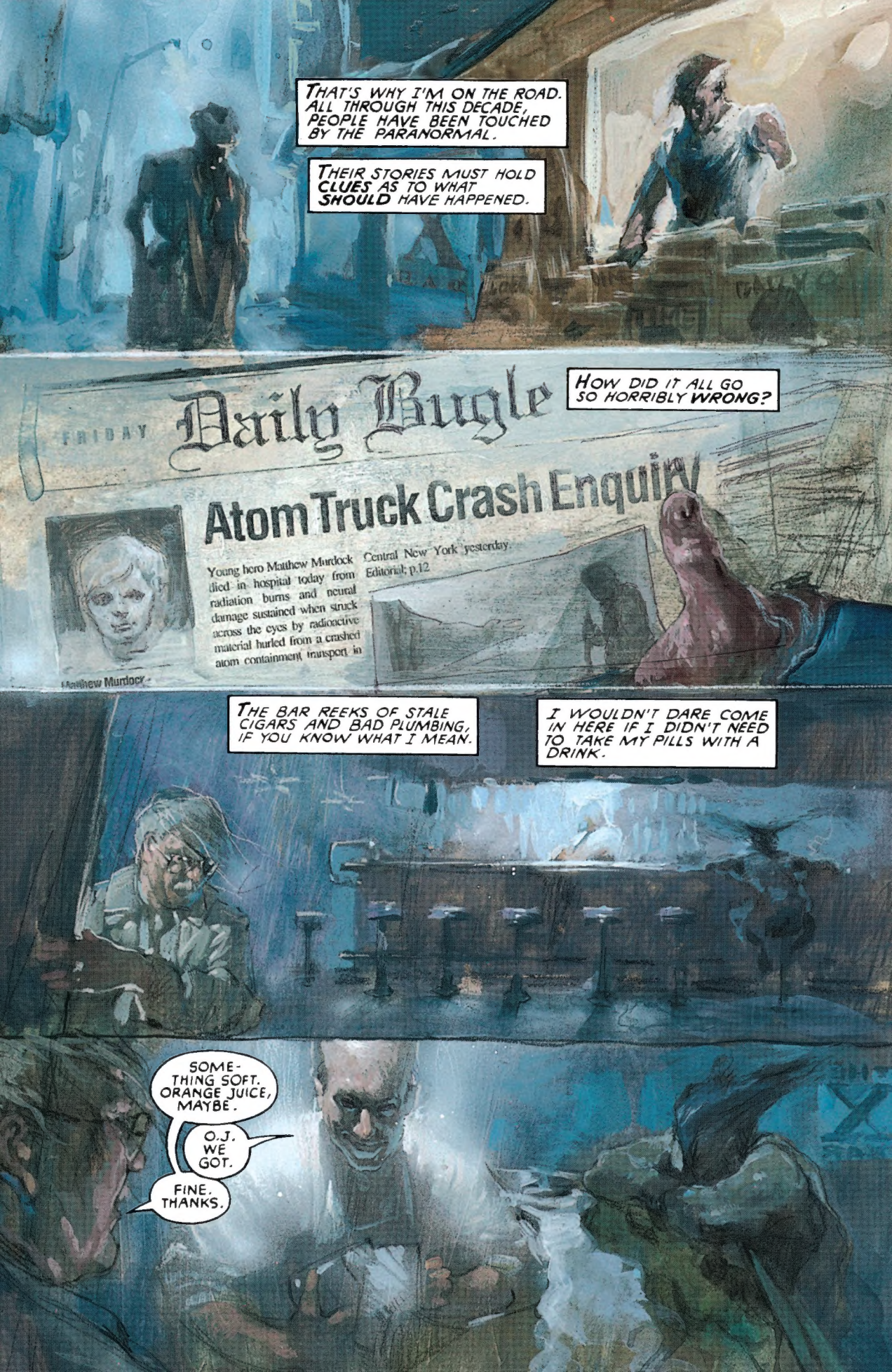
THE PATRIOT MISSILE BANGS OFF THE NATIONAL GUARD MOBILE LAUNCH PAD AND BLURS UPWARD HUNGRILY.

IT SLAMS INTO THE AVENGERS QUINJET AMIDSHIPS. THE CHILLY DRIZZLE EVAPORATES AS THE EXPLOSIVES IGNITE.

LOST, I WATCH SUPERHUMANS BURN IN THE MIDDAY SUN.

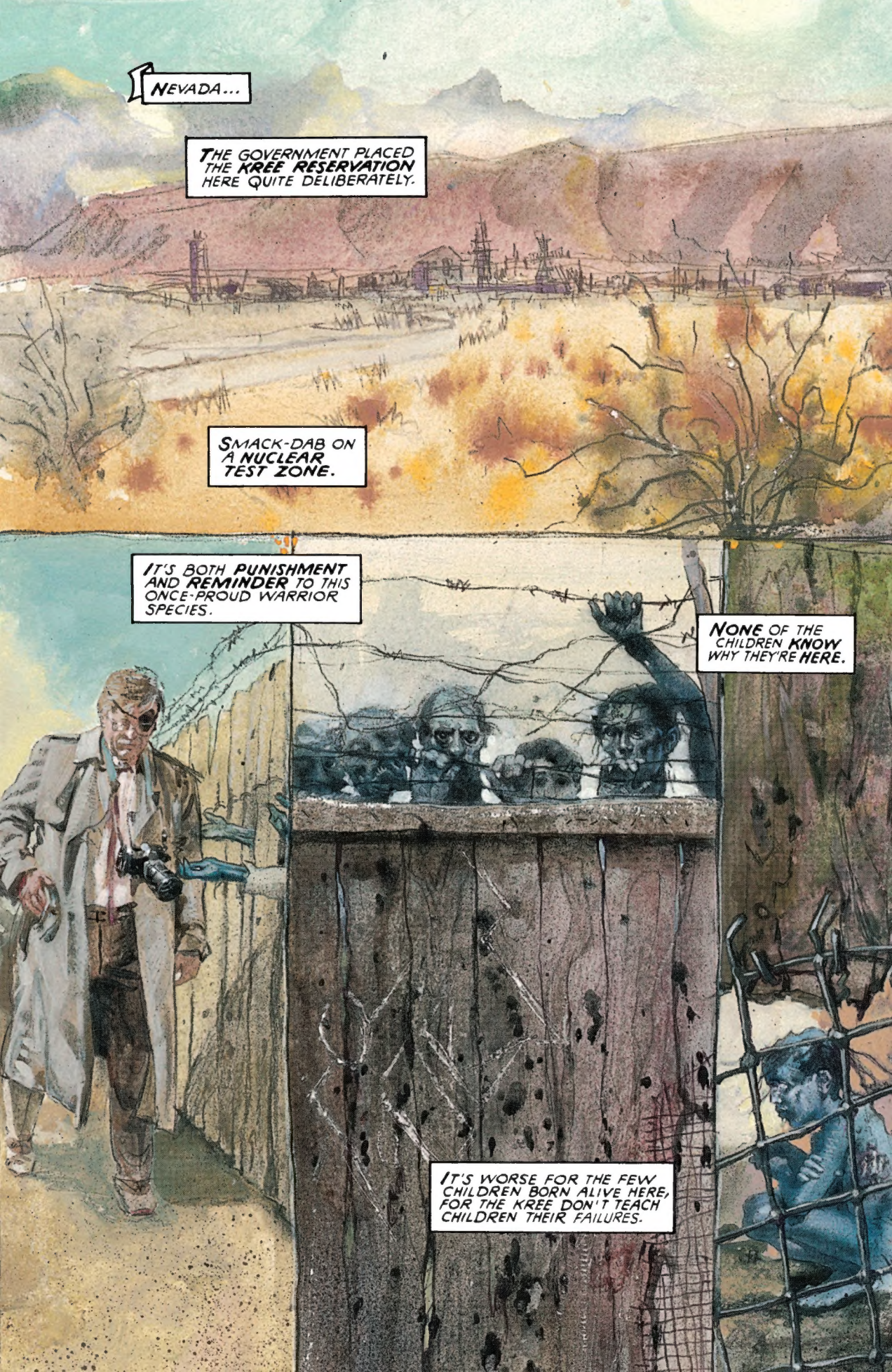

MY NAME'S PHILIP SHELDON, AND I'M WRITING THIS BECAUSE IT'S ALL GONE WRONG.
MY FRIENDS AND FAMILY THINK I'M NUTS. I'VE GIVEN UP MY PHOTOG JOB AT THE DAILY BUGLE FOR THIS.
CONSIDER THIS:
ANTHONY STARK, GENIUS-ENGINEER AND MILLIONAIRE INDUSTRIALIST, CALIFORNIA'S FAVORITE SON.
ALL SET, A FEW YEARS BACK, TO VISIT VIET NAM; USE HIS MARVELOUS MIND TO END THE WAR.
STARK IND
THE PRESIDENT SENT THE NATIONAL GUARD INTO CALIFORNIA TO SUPPRESS DISSENT AND PRO-SECESSIONISM.
STARK, TRYING TO MEDIATE, GOT CLIPPED BY SHRAPNEL FROM A NATIONAL GUARD GRENADE.
OH, STARK PUT THAT MARVELOUS MIND TO WORK, ALL RIGHT...


...HE SAVED HIMSELF WITH HIS TECHNOLOGY; BECAME "THE MAN IN THE IRON MASK" TO THE NEWSPAPERS.
AND THEN HE JOINED WITH THE OTHER CALIFORNIAN SCIENTISTS, LIKE PYM, AND THE GURUS LIKE STEPHEN STRANGE, TO FORM A REVOLUTIONARY CELL--
--THE AVENGERS.
THEY WERE REVOLUTIONARY HEROES OUT OF THE WILDEST ABSINTHE DREAMS OF FRENCH LITERATURE.
HANDSOME GENIUS WRAPPED IN STEEL. A MAN THE SIZE OF SKYSCRAPERS, A LOVELY WOMAN WITH DELICATE WINGS, THE COLD, YOUNG BOWMAN AND ALL THE OTHERS.
BUT THE GUARD STAYED, AND SECESSION FROM AMERICA BECAME JUST ANOTHER OLD IDEA.
WAS THAT THE LAST QUINJET? HOW MANY OF THEM ARE STILL ALIVE?
IT ALL WENT WRONG.
WE WERE ON THE CUSP OF AN AGE OF MARVELS, I KNOW IT--


THAT'S WHY I'M ON THE ROAD. ALL THROUGH THIS DECADE, PEOPLE HAVE BEEN TOUCHED BY THE PARANORMAL.
THEIR STORIES MUST HOLD CLUES AS TO WHAT SHOULD HAVE HAPPENED.
HOW DID IT ALL GO SO HORRIBLY WRONG?
FRIDAY
Daily Bugle
Atom Truck Crash Enquiry
Young hero Matthew Murdock died in hospital today from radiation burns and neural damage sustained when struck across the eyes by radioactive material hurled from a crashed atom containment transport in Central New York yesterday.
Editorial; p.12
Matthew Murdock
THE BAR REEKS OF STALE CIGARS AND BAD PLUMBING, IF YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN.
I WOULDN'T DARE COME IN HERE IF I DIDN'T NEED TO TAKE MY PILLS WITH A DRINK.
SOME-THING SOFT. ORANGE JUICE, MAYBE.
O.J. WE GOT.
FINE. THANKS.

BUY ME A DRINK OR I'LL KILL YA.
YOU DON'T WANNA TAKE ANY NOTICE O'LITTLE CANUCK HERE.
HE'S JUST CRANKY. JUST CRANKY, AIN'CHA, OLD GUY? GOT SOME KINDA GROSS BONE DISEASE.
SHOW THE NICE CUSTOMER YER HAND, LITTLE CANUCK.
HAHAHAHA
CAMON, LITTLE CANUCK. DON'T CRY. Awww...
PROMISED I'D GIVE YOU A DRINK FOR THAT, DIDN'T I?
SMALL ONE.

BOBBY SEALE, HUEY P. NEWTON AND T'CHALLA DES WAKANDAS OF THE BLACK PANTHER PARTY AT SAN FRANCISCO CITY JAIL.
CLINTON BARTON EXECUTED ON HAIGHT STREET BY A CALIFORNIAN MILITARY ADVISOR.
ANTHONY STARK IN SOUTH CENTRAL LOS ANGELES.
EX-AVENGER WANDA MAXIMOFF-LEHNSHERR TURNS STATE'S EVIDENCE IN RETURN FOR IMMUNITY AT THE DEPT. OF JUSTICE.

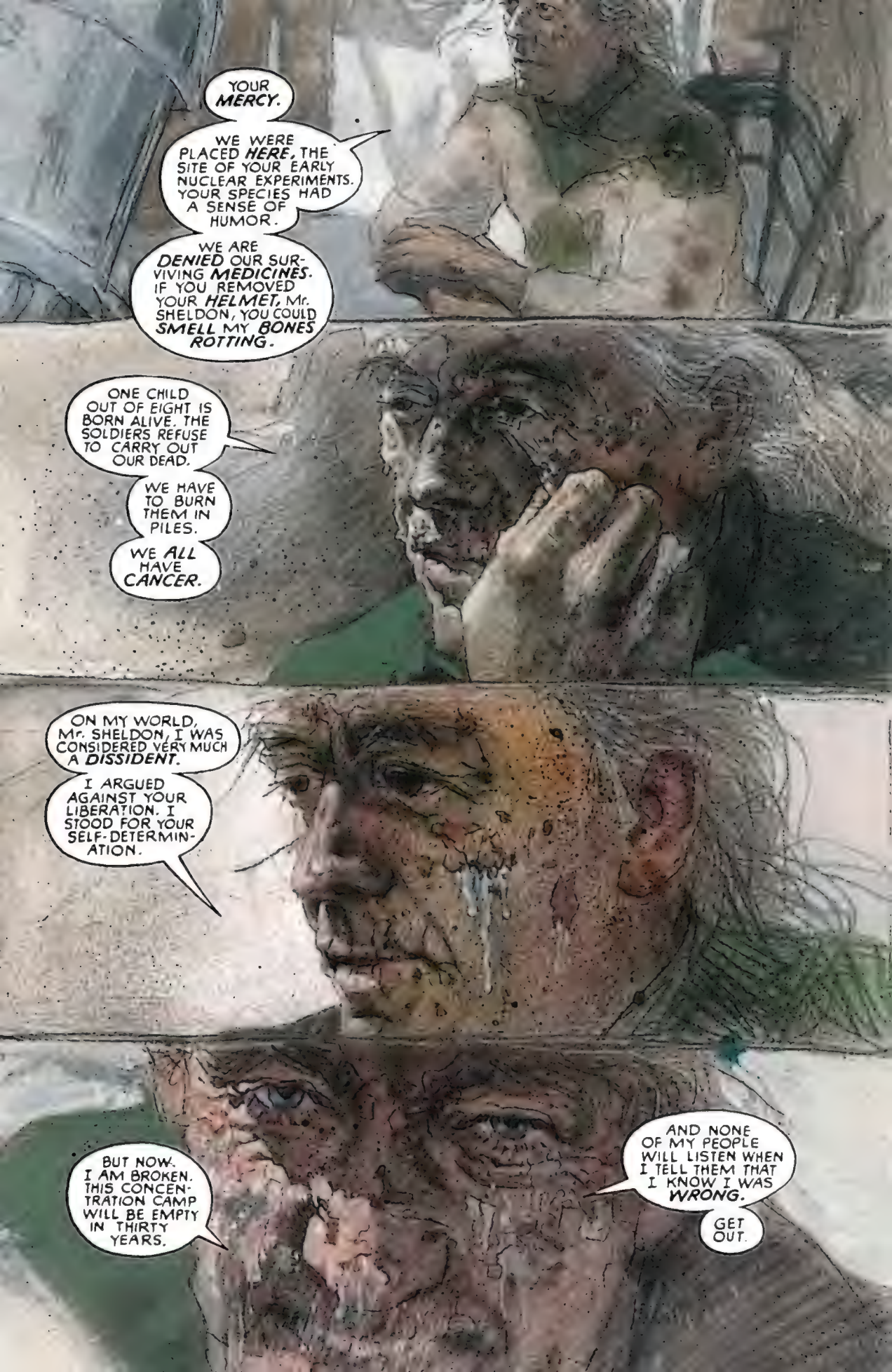

NEVADA...
THE GOVERNMENT PLACED THE KREE RESERVATION HERE QUITE DELIBERATELY.
SMACK-DAB ON A NUCLEAR TEST ZONE.
IT'S BOTH PUNISHMENT AND REMINDER TO THIS ONCE-PROUD WARRIOR SPECIES.
NONE OF THE CHILDREN KNOW WHY THEY'RE HERE.
IT'S WORSE FOR THE FEW CHILDREN BORN ALIVE HERE, FOR THE KREE DON'T TEACH CHILDREN THEIR FAILURES.

I'M HERE TO INTERVIEW THE KREE SPOKESMAN.
IN CONTRAST TO CALIFORNIA, THE SOLDIERS HERE ARE CHEERFUL, HAPPY TO ALLOW ME ACCESS.
BUT THEY WON'T LET ME NEAR THE KREE WITHOUT THE RADIATION SUIT.
AND THEY SEND ME THROUGH THE GATE ALONE.
SHOCKINGLY, THE ADULT KREE IGNORE ME.
I STARE SHAMELESSLY, GETTING MY FIRST CLOSE-UP LOOK AT AN ALIEN.
AN ALIEN RADDLED WITH SHAME AND CANCER, HALF-BLINDED BY A MUTANT CATARACT.
LIKE ME, HE HAS ONLY QUESTIONS BURNING IN HIS ONE GOOD EYE.
WHAT HAPPENED? HOW DID WE COME TO THIS?

WELL, I'M WRITING A BOOK, OR PLANNING TO, AND I DON'T HAVE A LOT OF TIME, IN A LOT OF WAYS, AND...
Mr. SHELDON. PLEASE BE SEATED.
I AM MAR-VELL, INTERLOCUTOR TO THE INTERNED KREE LIBERATION FORCE.
I UNDERSTAND YOU WISH AN INTERVIEW.
...WHY DID YOUR INVASION OF EARTH FAIL?
THREE YEARS AGO.
THE KLF WAS DIRECTED BY THE SUPREME INTELLIGENCE TO LIBERATE THIS WORLD FROM ITS GOVERNMENTS, AND YOKE IT TO OUR AUTHORITY.
I REMEMBER THE SINGING AS THE STRIKE CADRE LIFTED OFF FOR INTERSIDEREAL TRANSFER... HALA, THOSE SONGS.

"IT WAS ALL GOING SO WELL.
"THE HULL OF MY SHIP SHRILLED LIKE CHOIRS AS WE KICKED INTO TERRAN LOCAL SPACE, THE HYPERPORT LOCKING BEHIND US.
"WE'D SWEPT AROUND YOUR MOON, IN THE PROCESS OF NAILING DOWN PRELIMINARY ORBIT, WHEN WE SAW IT.
"A SILVERED HUMANOID, QUITE DEAD, SLOWLY TWISTING ABOVE THE EARTH.
"IT WAS A THING OF SPACE, A SEALED BIOLOGY WITHOUT NEED FOR ATMOSPHERE. BUT IT HAD BREATHED ONCE."

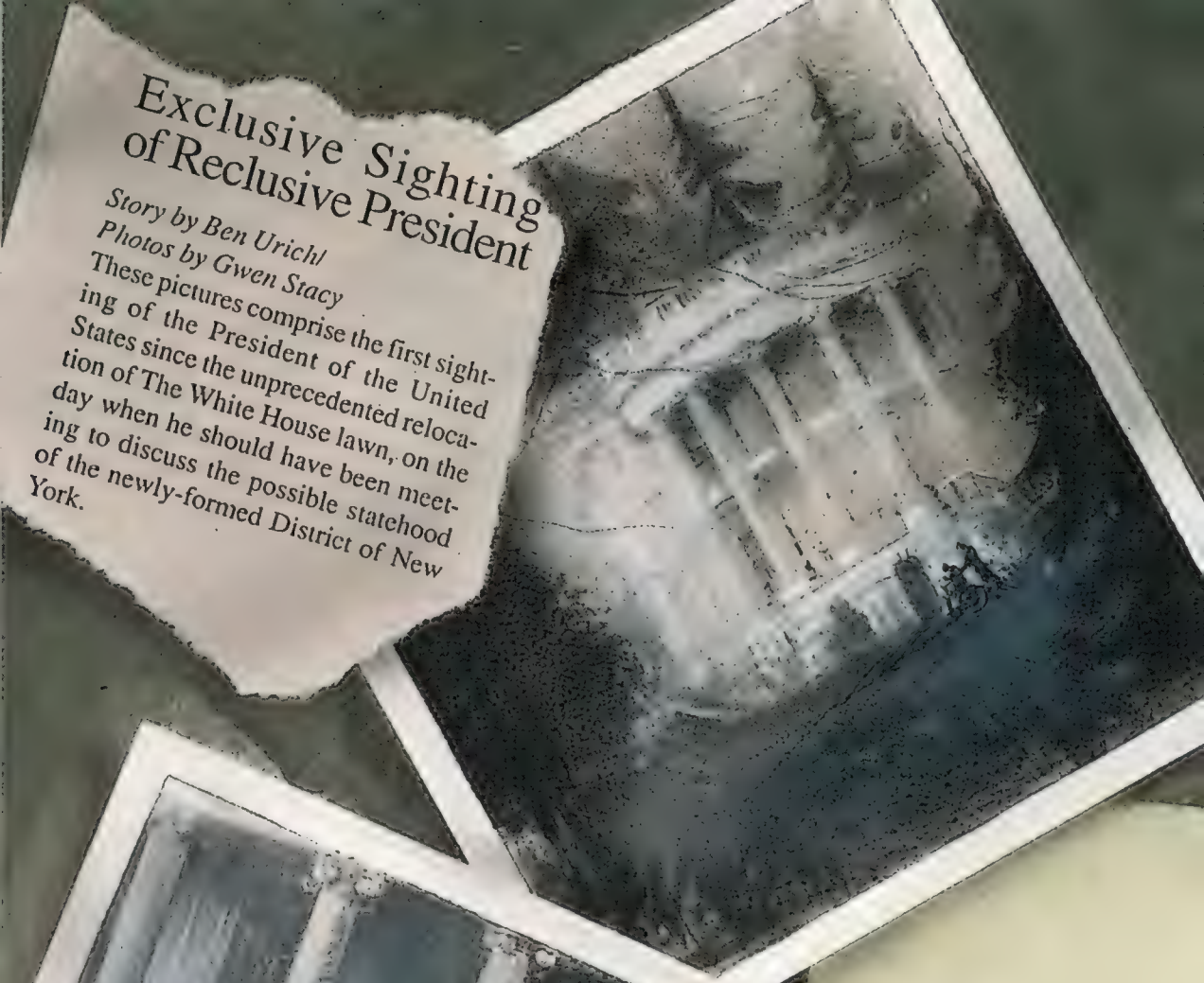
"PERHAPS IT HAD GONE MAD: WANTED TO KNOW AGAIN WHAT IT WAS LIKE TO BREATHE AIR. BUT IT WAS SEALED.
"OUR CONCLUSION WAS THAT, DERANGED, IT HAD CLAWED OPEN ITS OWN CHEST TO EXPOSE ITS LUNGS TO THE ATMOSPHERE.
"AND DIED OF SHOCK.
"TOO LATE, WE NOTICED THE CREATURE WAS GIVING OFF ENERGY-- SOME HORRIBLY POTENT COSMIC POWER BEYOND OUR EXPERIENCE.
"IT NEGATED OUR CLOAKING ARRAYS.
"WE HAD BARELY REALIZED OUR VISIBILITY WHEN YOUR DIRTY NUCLEAR PROJECTILES DETONATED AMONG US.
"YOU. ALL OF YOU. RETARDED LITTLE PINK MONKEYS WORKING IN UNISON FOR THE FIRST TIME -- TO KILL.
"IN THOSE PRECIOUS MINUTES, WE HAD BEEN EXPOSED TO THE STARE OF YOUR WORLD.
"BARELY A TENTH OF US SURVIVED, FALLING TO YOUR MERCY IN DROP-BOXES."


YOUR MERCY.
WE WERE PLACED HERE, THE SITE OF YOUR EARLY NUCLEAR EXPERIMENTS. YOUR SPECIES HAD A SENSE OF HUMOR.
WE ARE DENIED OUR SURVIVING MEDICINES. IF YOU REMOVED YOUR HELMET, Mr. SHELDON, YOU COULD SMELL MY BONES ROTTING.
ONE CHILD OUT OF EIGHT IS BORN ALIVE. THE SOLDIERS REFUSE TO CARRY OUT OUR DEAD.
WE HAVE TO BURN THEM IN PILES.
WE ALL HAVE CANCER.
ON MY WORLD, Mr. SHELDON, I WAS CONSIDERED VERY MUCH A DISSIDENT.
I ARGUED AGAINST YOUR LIBERATION. I STOOD FOR YOUR SELF-DETERMINATION.
BUT NOW. I AM BROKEN. THIS CONCENTRATION CAMP WILL BE EMPTY IN THIRTY YEARS.
AND NONE OF MY PEOPLE WILL LISTEN WHEN I TELL THEM THAT I KNOW I WAS WRONG.
GET OUT.

Exclusive Sighting of Reclusive President

Story by Ben Urich
Photos by Gwen Stacy

These pictures comprise the first sighting of the President of the United States since the unprecedented relocation of The White House lawn, on the day when he should have been meeting to discuss the possible statehood of the newly-formed District of New York.



The enlarged shot reveals the unusual Secret Serviceman pushing the President's wheelchair. The "wings" visible upon the man plainly cannot be real —a scratch on the film, a blurred development —but the White House Press Office remains silent on the matter.

In other developments, President X has authorized a new wave of airstrikes in the Genoshan Police Action, increasingly referred to as The Genoshan War.

WASHINGTON, D.C. AS IT WAS, SWALLOWED BACK UP BY ITS STATE NOW THAT THE WHITE HOUSE IS GONE.
I HATE THIS CITY.
IT'S HERE THAT THE AMERICAN DREAM DECIDED IT LIKED THE TASTE OF THE VOMIT IT WAS CHOKING ON.
JUST ROLLED OVER ON ITS BACK AND SCREAMED FOR MORE DRUGS.
IT DIDN'T DIE.

PEOPLE ARE STARTIN' TO NOTICE YOU, SHELDON.
COLONEL FURY. GOOD OF YOU TO FIND THE TIME TO MEET ME.
YOU USE MY NAME IN PUBLIC AGAIN, I'LL PUT A BULLET IN YOUR HEAD.
YOU'RE MAKING QUITE A STIR. BEEN SPOTTED IN THE TWO MOST SECURITY-SENSITIVE AREAS IN THE COUNTRY.
JEAN-PAUL! ALLEZ! Oh, MON PAUVRE FRERE... M'AIDER AVEC MON FRERE.
AND THEN YOU WRITE TO ME.
I TELL YOU, IF WE DIDN'T KNOW YOU WERE DYING, WE'D HAVE HAD YOU LOCKED UP IN CALIFORNIA.
HOW DID YOU KNOW?

NOT MUCH GETS PAST THE AGENCY. STILL DON'T KNOW WHY YOU'RE WASTING YOUR TWILIGHT DAYS ON THIS CROSS-COUNTRY THING, BUT--
--HOW ABOUT THIS RAIN, huh?
I'M WRITING A BOOK.
A BOOK.
THAT'S RIGHT. YOU STAY DOWN THERE.
NOW HEAR THIS; I'M CLEAN. I AIN'T SEEN AMERICA SINCE THE BIG WAR. AND I PROVED I GOT NO CONNECTION WITH THE AVENGERS.
yuh YOU DON'T uhUNDERSTAND. I'M NOT A POLITICAL WRITER.
IT'S THEM I'M WRITING ABOUT. THE DIFFERENT ONES.
I CONTACTED YOU BECAUSE YOU KNEW CAPTAIN AMERICA.

I AIN'T SEEN AMERICA IN A LONG, LONG TIME.
YOU EVER GET THE FEELING IT'S ALL GONE WRONG, SHELDON?
LIKE MAYBE ALL THIS WEIRD, SICK STUFF THAT HAPPENS SHOULD REALLY BE SOMETHIN' WONDERFUL?
=hhaaaahh=
YOU SEE, THE BOOK-- I MIGHT CALL IT "MARVELS"-- COMMUNICATES MY FEELING THAT THE WORLD TOOK A WRONG TURN.
INTERVIEWING PEOPLE WHO WITNESSED WEIRD PHENOMENA GIVES ME THE CLUES THAT--

WELL, Y'KNOW, I DON'T GET THAT FEELING.
I KINDA LIKE THINGS THE WAY THEY ARE. I DON'T FEEL GUILTY ABOUT NOT MAKING AN EFFORT TO UNDERSTAND THE WORLD.
LIKE, THIS DOG'S GOT RABIES. DO I CARE WHY? NO. EASY.
YOU'RE IN FOR A LOT OF PAIN, SHELDON.
Oh, I AIN'T GONNA STOP YOU INTERVIEWING FOLK FOR YOUR BOOK.
ME AND THE GUYS AT THE AGENCY WOULD LIKE READING SOMETHING LIKE THAT.
IN FACT, I'LL GIVE YOU AN ANECDOTE.
EXCUSE ME?
MY NAME'S JEAN.
I'LL DO IT BETTER THAN ANYONE FOR TWENTY DOLLARS.
BACK IN THE WAR, IT WAS AMERICA INTRODUCED ME TO EATING HUMAN MEAT.
NICE CLOTHES. NOT CHEAP.
HOW OLD ARE YOU, JEAN?
OLD AS YOU NEED.

DOUBT THAT.
PAIN.
THIS COUNTRY'S MUTATING. IT AIN'T REALLY REACHED NEW YORK YET.
YOU GOTTA BE A MUTANT TO SURVIVE WHAT'S COMING. X KNOWS, I TELL YA.
ARE YOU A MUTANT, COLONEL FURY?
"SURE. MORAL MUTANT."

I GOTTA TAKE A SHORT NAP NOW.
YOU JUST REMEMBER I'M CLEAN.
WE KILLED AMERICA WITH A PATRIOT MISSILE LAST WEEK.

Porn Star "ENCHANTRESS" Did She Kill Producer With MAGIC?

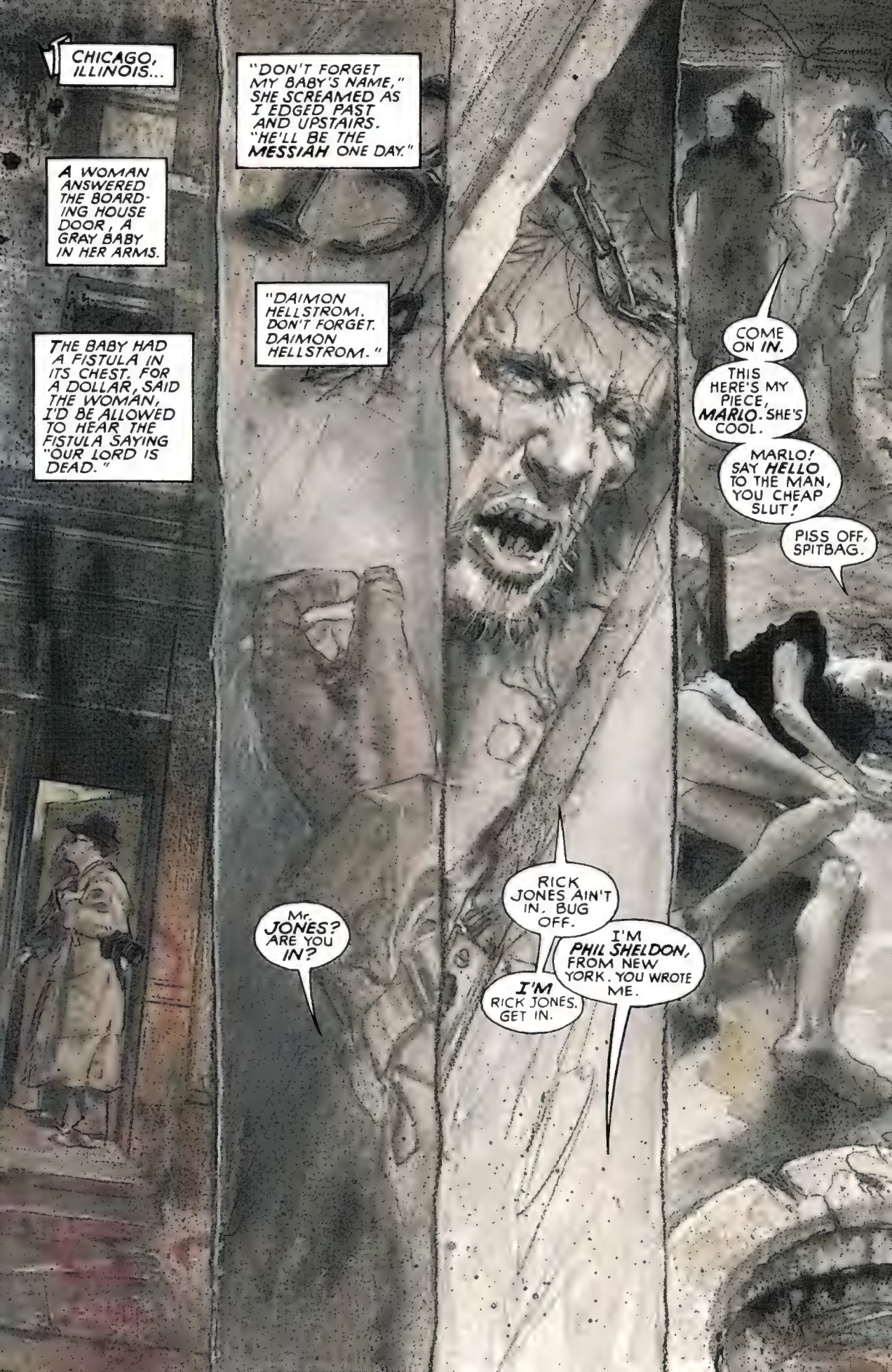
WEEKLY WORLD ENQUIRY

LARGEST CIRCULATION OF ANY PAPER

GOD FOUND DEAD IN SPACE

Full Story P. 3

TELESCOPE PHOTOS OF MARS DISCOVER CORPSE OF SUPREME BEING IN ORBIT


CHICAGO, ILLINOIS...
A WOMAN ANSWERED THE BOARDING HOUSE DOOR, A GRAY BABY IN HER ARMS.
THE BABY HAD A FISTULA IN ITS CHEST. FOR A DOLLAR, SAID THE WOMAN, I'D BE ALLOWED TO HEAR THE FISTULA SAYING "OUR LORD IS DEAD."
"DON'T FORGET MY BABY'S NAME," SHE SCREAMED AS I EDGED PAST AND UPSTAIRS. "HE'LL BE THE MESSIAH ONE DAY."
"DAIMON HELLSTROM. DON'T FORGET. DAIMON HELLSTROM."
Mr. JONES? ARE YOU IN?
RICK JONES AIN'T IN. BUG OFF.
I'M RICK JONES. GET IN.
I'M PHIL SHELDON, FROM NEW YORK. YOU WROTE ME.
COME ON IN.
THIS HERE'S MY PIECE, MARLO. SHE'S COOL.
MARLO! SAY HELLO TO THE MAN, YOU CHEAP SLUT!
PISS OFF, SPITBAG.

I'M GONNA IGNORE THAT 'CUZ WE GOT A GUEST, YOU SCAB! DON'T MAKE ME PUT A HAND TO YOU!
Umm... YOU WROTE TO ME ABOUT SOMETHING THAT HAPPENED IN ARIZONA ...SOME KIND OF CONSPIRACY.
Yeah! I WROTE ALLA YOU JOURNALIST GUYS! WANT THE STORY TOLD BEFORE THE CIA FINALLY GET ME.
'SCUSE ME. GOT LIQUID MORPHINE IN MY FLASK HERE, FOR THE PAIN.
ARIZONA. ME WITH A HEAD FULL OF KEROUAC, ON THE ROAD...
...HUGE PATCH OF DESERT WITH NOTHING HAPPENING ON IT. 'CEPT I REMEMBER SEEIN' THIS BIG WATERTOWER, OUT THERE ALONE IN THE BACK END OF NOWHERE.
SAT DOWN WITH MY GUITAR, MADE LIKE WOODY GUTHRIE UNDER A SKY GONE TENSE, LIKE BEFORE A THUNDERSTORM.

"I 'MEMBER I WAS JUST THINKIN' ABOUT PASTING A SIGN TO MY GUITAR, LIKE WOODY GUTHRIE DID.
"HIS SAID 'THIS MACHINE KILLS FASCISTS.'
"THEN I HEARD THE BIKE.
"THIS DOCTOR IN HIS WHITE COAT AND EVERYTHING, WAS, LIKE, RIPPING TOWARDS ME.
"THE GUY WAS WAVING AND SCREAMING AND SHOUTING. ALL I COULD HEAR WAS "TEST" AND "TRENCH".
"WELL, I KNEW THERE WAS A TRENCH. WHAT'D HE THINK, I WAS GONNA FALL IN?
"I WAS DEFINITELY GONNA HIT THE GUY. SOME ESTABLISHMENT NAZI COMIN' T'TELL ME I COULDN'T SIT THERE, . Jeez!
"THEN THE WATER TOWER STARTED TO SPARK."

"WELL, I WAS GONNA PUNCH THE PUS OUT OF GOEBBELS HERE--
"--'CEPT THERE WAS PANIC IN HIS EYES.
"HE SCREAMS AT ME, 'IT'S A BOMB--'
"AND I REALIZED, HE'S TRYING TO SAVE ME AND I CALLED HIM A NAZI AND ALL--
"--AND ALL I COULD THINK OF WAS THAT STUPID SIGN ON WOODY GUTHRIE'S GUITAR.
"'THIS MACHINE KILLS FASCISTS.'"

"IT HURT TO LOOK AT HIM.
"HIS SKIN WENT BLACK AND DRY, AND CRACKED, AND LIGHT SHONE OUT OF HIM, LIKE ALL HIS MEAT WAS ON FIRE.
BUT IT DIDN'T KILL HIM. NOT REALLY.
"THEN HE STARTED TO SWELL."

"AND THEN THE TUMORS BROKE HIM OPEN."

HE JUST TURNED INTO A MASS O' THIS CANCER-- AND HE WAS STILL ALIVE, MAN-- I COULD SEE IT.
THEY KEEP HIM IN A VAULT UNDER A LAKE NOW. CODENAME HULK, MAN. YOU ASK THE CIA.
HE WAS STILL ALIVE, MAN...
...STILL ALIVE...
BULL.
Y'RE JUST A STUPID JUNKIE TALKING A BUNCH O' STUPID JUNKIE SPIT.
YOU CHEAP SLUT! I WARNED YOU! I'M GONNA BREAK EVERY BONE IN YOUR CHEAP, SMACK-HEAD FACE, YOU--
IT'S A JUNKIE'S TALE, I AGREE. BUT LIQUID MORPHINE IS NOT A JUNKIE'S DRINK.
LIQUID MORPHINE IS USED TO BLOT OUT THE PAIN OF CANCER.

THE AIR'S NO FREER OF DEATH OUTSIDE THE PLACE.
SOMETHING HOWLING LIKE A WOLF ON A HIGH ROOF, THEN COUGHING LIKE A MAN WITH LUNG DAMAGE.
SNOW USED TO LEAVE THINGS LOOKING CLEAN.
SOMEONE ONCE TOLD ME CHICAGO SNOW HAS SKIN SCRAPINGS IN IT.
I COULD DO WITHOUT THE URBAN SOUNDTRACK: SPLINTERING BONE AND DAMP SCREAMS INSIDE, UPSTAIRS.
STIFLED POPS OF GUNFIRE OVER BY THE RIVERFRONT.

I DON'T WANT TO DIE.
DEATH IS SO CLOSE, SO LOADED IN MY VEINS AND TISSUES THAT I CAN ALMOST TASTE IT.
THE HEAVIEST SNOW I'VE EVER KNOWN.
DEATH IS EVERYWHERE. IT'S FALLING ON US ALL.
LET ME FIND AN ANSWER BEFORE I GO. LET ME SHOW THEM ALL HOW THIS HAPPENED.
PLEASE DON'T LET ME DIE IN THIS PLACE.
TO BE CONCLUDED...